



Public Affairs Office

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Corps cautions mariners about pipeline

Wilmington, N.C. – The Wilmington District US Army Corps of Engineers is urging mariners to use caution when navigating in the ocean near the approach to the Cape Fear River. Several submerged steel dredge pipelines, transporting dredged material from the Wilmington Harbor Deepening Project to Brunswick County Beaches, are located in this area (see blue and green lines on chart). More than 50,000 feet of pipeline, 34-inches in outside diameter, has been laid on the ocean floor. The pipeline is marked by yellow buoys with amber lights spaced 1,000 feet apart.

The longest stretch of pipeline extends from the future Wilmington Harbor Ocean Bar Channel to the Ocean Crest Pier on Oak Island (see blue line on chart). At the existing Wilmington Harbor Ocean Bar Channel, the pipeline is submerged into a trench excavated across the channel to provide a channel crossing. The channel crossing area is marked with a green-lighted buoy at the west end and a red-lighted buoy at the east end.

Shrimpers must carefully manage their nets when in the vicinity of the pipeline. "Shrimpers cannot drag their nets across the pipeline," said Corps Marine Biologist Phil Payonk. "For their safety, they will have to pull up their nets if they want to cross over the pipeline."

Shrimpers should also be aware that the new channel under construction (see red line on chart) is not marked and could pose some risk. "The new channel won't be marked for about a year because it's not complete," said Payonk. "But shrimpers need to be aware that major portions of the new channel have been dug, and right now, some areas are deeper than others. The bottom is uneven. If nets are pulled over this rough bottom, it could damage trawler equipment. A lot of dredging has occurred in the past year, and those bottoms are really different from what the shrimpers are used to."

Another section of submerged pipeline near the east end of Oak Island traverses the small natural *Western Channel* frequently used by fishing boats (see green line on chart). In addition to the yellow buoys with amber lights marking this submerged pipeline, a crossing area is marked by a green-lighted buoy at the west end of the opening and a red-lighted buoy at the east end of the opening. Mariners must not attempt to cross the pipeline at any other location. "A lot of small boats go through this area before sunrise to get bait and to fish," said the Corps' Chief of Navigation, Bob Sattin. "Actually, this is not an authorized navigation

channel and mariners use this channel at their own risk. It's difficult to navigate safely in this area. If mariners don't know what the lights mean, they could really get hurt."

The Coast Guard began broadcasting Notice to Mariners about the pipelines on August 1st. Mariners may contact Bean Stuyvesant Dredge Company on VHF FM Channel 13 and 14 for more information. A navigation chart with the pipeline locations can be viewed and downloaded from the Wilmington District US Army Corps of Engineers website at www.saw.usace.army.mil.